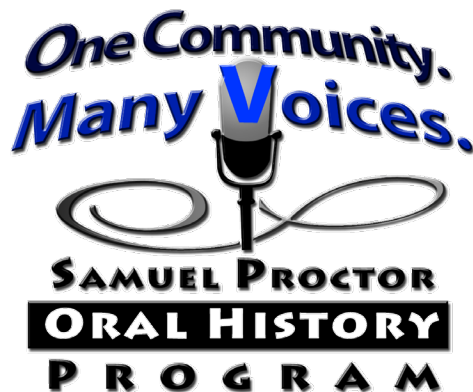


Ida Harris and Mary Harris

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-059**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
December 13, 1971**



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CAT 059 Ida Harris and Mary Harris
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Interviewed by Emma Reid Echols on December 13, 1971
19 minutes | 14 pages

Abstract: The first part of this interview is with Ida Harris and the second part of this interview is with her mother, Mary Harris. Ida Harris details her living and dead family members, as well as her past teachers. She then talks about her mother's pottery, particularly an unburnt pipe that she keeps with her everywhere she goes. She then describes her experience with the land division. Ida Harris ends by talking about her siblings. Then, the interview restarts with Mary Harris who talks about her children and late husband. Mary Harris talks about Catawba words and her experience making pottery and working in the fields. She talks about the food she made and ate as a child and the doctors who delivered her children.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; Chief Samuel Taylor Blue; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Indigenous languages; Pottery]

ORAL HISTORY

P R O G R A M

University of Florida

CAT 059

Interviewee: Ida Harris and Mary Harris

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: December 13, 1971

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Rock Hill, South Carolina, Route 6, Box 260. I'm recording the history of the Catawba Indians. I'm visiting in the home of Ida Harris. Ida, will you tell me your full name and address?

IH: My name's Ida Harris. I'm on Route 3, Rock Hill.

E: What family do you have, Ida?

IH: Oh, my son, my daughter-in-law. I got two sons, but just one here. And my mother.

E: Who was your mother, and your father?

IH: Mary Harris, and Ben Harris.

E: Now, how long has your father been dead?

IH: I don't know how long he's been dead. He died when he was fifty years old.

E: Now, was he a full-blooded Catawba Indian?

IH: Yes.

E: And your mother a full-blooded Catawba Indian?

IH: Yes.

E: Now, how old is your mother, now?

IH: She's ninety-seven.

E: Do you remember who your grandparents were?

IH: Yes. On Mom's side, Taylor George and Emily George and my father's mother was Nancy Harris. And his daddy was killed in war a long years ago. I never did see him.

E: What was his name?

IH: John Harris.

E: Have you been living here all of your life?

IH: Right here I have.

E: On the reservation?

IH: I did on the reservation. I was raised on the reservation.

E: As a child, you went to school on the reservation. Do you remember what your schoolhouse looked like?

IH: Yeah, but, I can't now, 'cause— [Laughter] It was long.

E: And what about your teachers? Who were your teachers?

IH: [inaudible 1:59] I can't think.

E: Miss Macie Stevenson ever teach you?

IH: Yeah. I went to school long ago.

E: Did Mrs. **Holspencer** ever teach you?

IH: No, she didn't.

E: That must've been a little bit later.

IH: Yes, I know.

E: What—tell me some of the things you did in school? Do you remember anything special you did? Did you write on slates, or write on paper?

IH: We wrote on slates and blackboards.

E: And the blackboard?

IH: I went to school under my father, Ben Harris.

E: Your father's Ben Harris?

IH: Uh, huh. And I went to school under him; he was the teacher.

E: How long did your father teach school?

IH: Well, he teached about five or six sessions, you know, while I was small.

E: Now, how far did you live from the school?

IH: Oh, I'd say almost a half a mile.

E: You went home for lunch every day?

IH: Home for lunch every day.

E: Did your mother make pottery, and did you ever help her make pottery?

IH: Yeah, I used to, not help her to make it, I'd help her, you know, smooth it off when she trimmed it up.

E: Does your mother still have some of those old smoothing stones?

IH: I don't think she has. She ain't got but one thing she's made that I've kept.

E: What's that?

IH: She's got a pipe that she made with dry clay. You know, make her some pipe molds; it's never been burnt.

E: Well, you'll have to burn it one of these days, so to see what colors come out in that one, won't you?

IH: Yes. You know, just a solid piece of clay that she made with her hands to make her a pipe mold. She still does it. I keep it everywhere I go. I put it up for her.

E: What kind of foods did you have in the old days? Did you cook it over open fireplace?

IH: Sometime we did, and most the time we used the woodstoves.

E: Did you raise most of the foods on the farm, or in your gardens?

IH: Well, we had gardens and raised our own corn, our meal, stuff like that. Canned stuff.

E: And you dried some of your fruits, too, I suppose?

IH: Some of them did.

E: Did you ever help your mother make homemade soup?

IH: No, I never did see her make none. I've made it for myself since I've been grown.

E: And did you ever make lye hominy?

IH: Yes, ma'am. We've made that a lot of times.

E: Well, when the lands were divided, did you take your share in some money or land?

IH: I took it in land.

E: And how many acres of land did you get?

IH: Just six.

E: Six. Now, is this tract of land her part of that?

IH: Oh, no, ma'am. We rent. This here belongs to the Bradley's.

E: What happened to your six acres of land?

IH: I sold mine. It was way out on the Springsteen Farm. And Momma, she sold hers; I sold mine. But I wasn't staying at home at that time. I was out babysitting for a living.

E: Are you sorry you sold your land now?

IH: Well, I couldn't say I'm too sorry.

E: Do you remember any of the old words of your language? Do you remember any of the names that you called your food?

IH: No, ma'am, I never did learn that. But, you know, our daddy was the oldest one in our family. That is, our mother couldn't speak it, but her father did, and our father. But outside of that, none of the children didn't learn that.

E: How did you use to sell your pottery when you had it made?

IH: Well, I'd carry it to town and sell it.

E: Would you go to Winthrop College and spread it out there to sell?

IH: Well, now, whenever I had a way to go, I would. You know, just in the car with somebody. But outside of that, I did a lot of 'em up at Cherokee, you know, and sold it. I went there one time.

E: But you didn't like it at Cherokee, and decided to come back here to live, didn't you?

IH: No. We just went out there and sold pots and come back. We'd go one, say, leave here on Thursday, come back on Saturday nights.

E: Now, your mother is ninety-seven, and she's the oldest living Catawba Indian, is that right?

IH: Yes.

E: And she's, of course, a full-blooded one. How long have you been taking care of your mother?

IH: Oh, I couldn't tell you, 'cause it's been for years and years and years. She was in the house with us. Me and her lived down yonder next to one of her grandsons down there next to Martha's, in one of his houses.

E: Now, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

IH: I had three brothers; I ain't got no brother living.

E: And you have how many sisters living?

IH: Four.

E: What are their names?

IH: Sally Wade, Martha Thompson, October—well, Nancy now—and Minnie Harris.

E: You still got a big family with your grandchildren and others here, I know.

[Break in recording]

E: And what was your sister's name?

MH: Rachel.

E: Now, tell me what your name was again.

MH: Huh?

E: Tell me your name again.

MH: My name Mary Dennis Camelius.

E: Now, you talk nice and plain. And your husband is who?

MH: I married my husband. He is a Harris. Ben Taylor Harris.

E: And how many children did you have?

MH: Ten.

E: Ten children! You know how many you have living now?

MH: Nine.

E: Can you tell me any of their names?

MH: That's all I had, ten children.

E: There was Ida, and who else?

MH: Sally was the oldest.

E: And who else?

MH: And then Robert.

E: And who else?

MH: Then Robert and Martha. Nancy.

E: Nancy. That's right. Did you have another one?

MH: Huh?

E: And what was another one?

MH: What was her name?

E: Have another name of your children? You've got five living, haven't you? Your girls are living, but your boys are all gone, is that right?

MH: I guess so. Sally's still living.

E: That's right.

MH: October's still living. We call her October, for her nickname because that's what her brother called her.

E: Is that right? Now, did you give your children nicknames? Did they have Indian names ever?

MH: [inaudible 9:16]

E: Did you ever have an Indian name? Did you speak the Indian language when you were a young girl?

MH: Yes. My dad was full Catawba Indian, but my mother wasn't.

E: Do you remember any of the words? What word did you use for "cornbread"?

MH: [Catawba word 9:39]

E: What did you use for "field," or "working"? Did you have a word for that?

MH: For what?

E: What word did you have for "working in the field"?

MH: They call meat [Catawba word 9:54]

E: [Catawba word 9:55] is your name?

MH: That's what you call the **meat**.

E: Oh, I see.

MH: Then, when they want to sell, they'd call it [Catawba word 10:04]

E: What other words do you remember in the language?

MH: I just use words like you're talking now.

E: Like I'm talking now?

MH: Like you. I asked different people, you know, about the old folks, what I knowed.

E: Did you make pottery when you were a young girl?

MH: Make pottery?

E: Yeah.

MH: I worked in the clay and worked in the fields.

E: You did?

MH: I'd work in the fields in daylight and make my pots at night.

E: And you'd cook 'em in the fireplace?

MH: I'd cook 'em in the fireplace.

E: Then where would you go to sell those pots?

MH: Just anywhere we could get to sell. When we had a car, down there, we'd take them to the college.

E: You took them up to Winthrop College? You spread them out in front of Winthrop on the street and sell them?

MH: We'd sell them. **Here and there and lots of** different things.

E: Did you ever have a chance to go to school at all?

MH: Huh?

E: Did you ever have a chance to go to school at all?

MH: No. We didn't think the Indian children could learn like the others then. They had to do just the best they could. My husband learned reading by picking up newspapers, and he'd go to her house, Mrs. Culp. He'd go up there and work for her, and she, taught him to read.

E: Who was it taught him to read?

MH: Huh?

E: Who taught him to read? The White lady? You said he learned it from the newspaper, and he took the newspapers to the lady's house, then she taught him to read. Is that right?

MH: No, she took the Herald from Rock Hill. She give him a schoolbook and he learned from that.

E: Who was that lady? Do you remember her name?

MH: Dottie Culp.

E: Dottie Culp. Do you remember what the little schoolhouse looked like? There was one down on the reservation.

MH: No, I never did go.

E: So, you didn't learn to read or write?

MH: I was too old to take it.

E: But you learned to cook, you learned to make pottery, and you raised your family, didn't you?

MH: Worked in field.

E: Did you go to church?

MH: No, ma'am.

E: On the reservation?

MH: No ma'am. Sometime I go to church if I had to go. I couldn't get out.

E: Did you go at Christmastime to your church?

NH: I couldn't go nowhere.

E: What were some of the things you used to have to eat down on the reservation?

MH: I don't know. Corn.

E: Did you like to have your coffee?

MH: Huh?

E: Did you have coffee?

MH: Yeah.

E: And cornbread? And did you raise some hogs? Your husband—?

MH: I had my cornbread. I had my cornbread, and biscuit bread.

E: That's right. And you cooked your cornbread over in the fireplace, is that right?
How long did you stay with your grandson down at the Catawba Nation?

MH: I stayed there. I'm still living with him. My son, he had a operation, and he died on the operating table from a cancer.

E: Who was the doctor down on the reservation that came and brought your babies?

MH: Dr. Blackburn.

E: Dr. Blackburn and Dr. Hill both, wasn't it?

MH: Dr. Blackburn, and Dr. Hill, too. And there's another one, but I can't think of his name.

E: Did they ever spend the night at your house?

MH: Huh?

E: Did they ever spend the night at your house?

MH: Unh-uh.

E: You never did learn to read? Did your husband ever read the Bible to you?

MH: My husband was a preacher.

E: He was a preacher! Did he preach at the church? Read the Bible from the church?

MH: Baptist Church.

E: Baptist church. Well, that was unusual then for him to be a Baptist, and you an Indian, wasn't it?

MH: Ma'am?

E: That was unusual for him to be a Baptist go to the Baptist church, wasn't it?

MH: Unh-uh.

E: Who is the oldest Indian you remember? Did you know Tom—?

MH: Ma'am?

E: Do you remember Thomas Stevens Harris? An old Indian who was 110 years old, do you remember him? Thomas Stevens?

MH: Huh?

E: You remember Chief Blue, don't you? You remember Chief Blue?

MH: You come over here and talk to me. I can't hear good.

E: Do you remember Chief Blue?

MH: Chief Blue?

E: Yeah.

MH: That's my brother-in-law.

E: That's right, he's your brother-in-law. His wife is your sister? How are you kin to Chief Blue?

MH: His wife was cousin of mine.

E: His wife was your cousin? She was a full-blooded Indian, too, wasn't she?

MH: Yes, ma'am.

E: She used to make a lot of pottery.

MH: But Sam wasn't.

E: That's right. Sam was not a full-blooded Indian. Well, there's lots of your kinfolks left around this community.

MH: Yeah, I got a lot of kinfolks down there.

E: Do many of them come to see you?

MH: Some of them comes that can get here, but ones that can't, they have no way in. They can't visit with no cars **about it**.

E: Well, they all remember you, and ask about you down there.

MH: Yeah [inaudible 16:32] sugar diabetes **until it burned right off all over one time**. [inaudible 16:48] **She wanted to make a pie**. [inaudible 16:58]

E: What's her name?

MH: [inaudible 17:09]

E: And what was the name of your cousin who got so badly burned?

MH: Her name's Nancy.

E: Nancy who? What's her other name?

MH: Nancy Harris. She married a Harris.

E: Oh, yes Nancy Harris. And how old is she?

MH: I don't know. I can't read, you know.

E: Well, one thing you'll be hearing, you're going to be hearing that Christmas music real soon. You can hear it, can't you?

MH: I can't hardly hear.

E: You're hearing me now, though, aren't you?

MH: Well, that's true.

E: I bet you used to sing those Christmas songs when you were a young girl, didn't you?

MH: I can hear a little bit out of one ear, out of the right ear, but my left ear I can't hear nothing.

E: Did all of your children go to school?

MH: Yes, most of them went to school.

E: You say you don't rest good at night?

MH: No, ma'am.

E: Are you looking forward to Christmas?

MH: Well—

E: Your daughters will all be here to see you, and your grandchildren be here to see you, and they'll bring back many memories of how you used to be in your own home, with your own family, wouldn't it?

MH: I won't be able to say that.

E: You'll be warm and comfortable, and I hope you'll have a happy Christmas.

MH: Yeah, but the condition I'm in. I hate to tell you all the troubles I'm having.

E: Well, I think I better tell you goodbye. Can you say goodbye the way the Indians used to say it? What word they have for "goodbye"?

MH: Goodbye.

[End of interview]

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